

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for managing an electronic negotiation, comprising:
- sending a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating party for
- specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer including
specification of at least one attribute;
- receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party;
- sending a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for forming a
- counter offer to a target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party of the
10 counter offer object is the first negotiating party;
- receiving the counter offer from the second negotiating party;
- validating the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the rules of
- the negotiation; and
- sending the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to engage
- 15 said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

2. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said
counter offer object is adapted for specification of at least one additional attribute in
forming said counter offer.

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3. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said
rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of offer rules,
disclosure rules, and deal striking rules.

4. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with a plurality of negotiating parties in a switchable bilateral negotiation, a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with at least one negotiating party in a concurrent bilateral negotiation, a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with exactly one negotiating party in a bilateral negotiation, and a rule allowing each of said negotiation parties to engage in active negotiation at least one other negotiation parties in a many-to-many multilateral negotiation.

5. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of a rule allowing said second negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with only said first negotiating party and a rule allowing said second negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with a plurality of negotiating parties

6. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with a plurality of negotiating parties in a switchable bilateral negotiation and a rule allowing switching of active negotiation only when a competing offer improves upon a previous offer by a predetermined amount.

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7. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with exactly at least one negotiating party in a concurrent bilateral negotiation and a rule allowing active negotiation when a corresponding offer satisfies said offer rules.

8. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with exactly one negotiating party in a bilateral negotiation and a rule excluding all other parties from said active negotiation.

9. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a dynamic rule and wherein compliance of said dynamic rule depends upon a history of the negotiation.

10. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a static rule and wherein compliance of said static rule depends solely upon the offer.

11. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes at least one offer rule selected from the group consisting of a rule allowing only eligible parties to participate in the negotiation, a rule requiring each counter offer to improve upon a previous offer, a rule requiring each counter offer to improve upon a previous offer by a predetermined amount, and a rule requiring each counter offer to be submitted within a predetermined period of time.

12. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes at least one deal striking rule selected from the group consisting of a rule forming a deal upon acceptance of an offer by one of said parties, a rule allowing each of said parties to the negotiation to submit one more offer prior to forming a deal and after acceptance of an offer by one of said parties, and a rule allowing each of said parties to the negotiation to submit offers for a predetermined period of time prior to forming a deal and after acceptance of an offer by one of said parties.

13. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said specification of at least one attribute includes specification of a value associated with the attribute and specification of a negotiability of the attribute value.

14. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

sending the counter offer object to said first negotiating party for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party;

5 receiving the counter offer from the first negotiating party;

validating the counter offer of the first negotiating party if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

10 sending the validated counter offer of the first negotiating party to the second negotiation party.

15 15. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

sending the counter offer object to a third negotiating party for forming a third party counter offer to said negotiation initiating offer;

receiving the third party counter offer from the third negotiating party;

validating the counter offer of the third negotiating party if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

sending the validated counter offer of the third negotiating party to the first negotiation party.

16. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

forming a negotiation state machine upon receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine maintaining a current and previous states of the negotiation; and
5 updating said negotiation state machine with each validated counter offer.

17. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 16, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a dynamic rule and wherein compliance of
10 said dynamic rule depends upon said previous state of the negotiation.

18. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 16, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a static rule and wherein compliance of said dynamic rule depends only upon said current state of the negotiation.

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19. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request for a retraction of an offer from one of said negotiating parties;

5 validating the retraction request if the request complies with the rules of the negotiation, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes an offer retraction rule;

retracting said offer if the retraction request is validated; and

10 sending an offer retraction message to the target of the offer if the offer is retracted.

20. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving an accept offer object for accepting one of said offers from one of said negotiating parties;

15 sending an offer acceptance message to said one of said negotiating parties;

and

forming a deal based upon said rules of the negotiation, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes an offer acceptance rule.

21. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a reject offer object for rejecting one of said offers of one of said negotiating parties from the target of said one of said offers; and

5 sending a reject offer message to said one of said negotiating parties.

22. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

10 receiving a negotiation break off object for breaking off the negotiation with one of said negotiating parties; and

sending a negotiation break off message to said one of said negotiating parties.

23. A negotiation facilitator system for managing an electronic negotiation,
comprising:

means for sending a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating
party for specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer
5 including specification of at least one attribute;

means for receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating
party;

means for sending a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for
forming a counter offer to a target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party
10 of the counter offer object is the first negotiating party, said counter offer object adapted
for specification of at least one additional attribute;

means for receiving the counter offer from the second negotiating party;

means for validating the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the
rules of the negotiation; and

15 means for sending the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to
engage said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

24. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:
means for sending the counter offer object to said first negotiating party for
forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party; and
means for receiving the counter offer from the first negotiating party;
5 means for validating the counter offer of the first negotiating party if the
counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and
means for sending the validated counter offer of the first negotiating party to
the second negotiation party.

10 25. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:
means for sending the counter offer object to a third negotiating party for
forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said negotiation initiating offer;
means for receiving the counter offer from the third negotiating party;
means for validating the counter offer of the third negotiating party if the
15 counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and
means for sending the validated counter offer of the third negotiating party
to the first negotiation party.

26. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:
means for forming a negotiation state machine upon receiving the
negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine
maintaining a current state of the negotiation; and
5 means for updating said negotiation state machine with each validated
counter offer.

26. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:
means for forming a negotiation state machine upon receiving the
negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine
maintaining a current state of the negotiation; and
5 means for updating said negotiation state machine with each validated
counter offer.

27. A computer program product for managing a multilateral negotiation, comprising:

computer code that sends a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating party for specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer including specification of at least one attribute;

computer code that receives the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party;

computer code that sends a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for forming a counter offer to a target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party of the counter offer object is the first negotiating party, said counter offer object adapted for specification of at least one additional attribute; and

computer code that receives the counter offer from the second negotiating party;

computer code that validates the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

computer code that sends the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to engage said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.

28. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the computer readable medium is selected from the group consisting of CD-ROM, zip disk, floppy disk, tape, flash memory, system memory, hard drive, and data signal embodied in a carrier wave.

29. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:
computer code that sends the counter offer object to said first negotiating
party for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party;
and
5 computer code that receives the counter offer from the first negotiating
party;
computer code that validates the counter offer of the first negotiating party if
the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and
computer code that sends the validated counter offer of the first negotiating
10 party to the second negotiation party.

30. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:
computer code that sends the counter offer object to a third negotiating party
for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said negotiation initiating offer;
15 computer code that receives the counter offer from the third negotiating
party;
computer code that validates the counter offer of the third negotiating party
if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and
computer code that sends the validated counter offer of the third negotiating
20 party to the first negotiation party.

31. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:
computer code that forms a negotiation state machine upon receiving the
negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine
maintaining a current state of the negotiation; and
5 computer code that updates said negotiation state machine with each
validated counter offer.

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